Written by Makula Dunbar, TC Daily Planet
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Last year, FLOW Northside Arts Crawl rolled into the neighborhood on a diminished note. With much dedication and many art projects focused on the 2011 May tornado, this year FLOW artistic director Dudley Voigt said the event was scaled back up to its potential.

Pictured: Soul Train line participant

Saturday July 28, dozens of artists specializing in painting, dance, spoken word, graffiti, music and visual media presented work at more than 20 public art and exhibit spaces. With a mobile pedal stage and the addition of a nearly two-block-long Soul Train line, this year FLOW was all about movement.

"As always it's about getting people out on the avenue. This time we're giving people different ways to travel down the avenue," Voigt said. "I'm proud FLOW happened last year despite challenges. I'm glad that people continue to come to us with really cool ways that they want to participate."

Produced by the West Broadway Business & Area Coalition, FLOW made impressive headway with the unveiling of Juxtaposition's artist live/work space located at 1108 W. Broadway. More than a handful of rooms were open for browsing, giving northsiders a first look at a place to develop their craft.

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ictured: Even Olympian gymnasts couldn't compete with the FLOW!

Artistic director Kenna-Camara Cottman moved her organization into the space a month ago. The West African drum and dance collective Voice of Culture opened the arts crawl livening the crowd in front of the KFAI radio stage.

"I'm a Northside resident so my experience has been great. It's wonderful to have a space in my community because one of my goals is to bring drum and dance of our African ancestors to the people in this community. It's been like a homecoming," Cottman said. An instructor known for working in the community, Cottman also gave mini soul dance lessons to those taking part in the main attraction — a Guinness World Record attempt for the longest Soul Train line.

Organized and facilitated by 89.9 KMOJ and Obsidian Arts — the Soul Train line which community members registered to participate in was stationed on West Broadway and Knox Avenue just past two of the three art clusters (Penn Ave., Emerson Ave. and N. 2nd). Songs like The Commodores' "Brick House" could be heard from blocks away. Many onlookers danced in groups on the sidewalks.

"I grew up watching Soul Train and I said to myself if I ever get a chance to participate in something like that I am," said Roy Oglesby Jr., a St. Paul resident.

"[FLOW is] really nice and everything is going fine. There's no rigmarole or nothing going on like that. It's good to see, I'm really diggin' it," he said.

"I hope the community understands that we can continue to get together with major events, not have any trouble and just have a great time," said Kelvin Quarles, general manager of KMOJ. "We're out here so people can enjoy the art, learn more and have a great time."

Perfect weather conditions encouraged groups to linger around clusters and various stages. Walking tours, a puppet show, murals and makeshift arts and craft stops filled in the blanks between exhibits. Indoor entertainment at The Capri theater included a documentary titled, "Cornerstones: A History of North Minneapolis" and Taiko Drumming by Mu Daiko. With a deeper focus on photography — in conjunction with photo project Northside365, snapshots of North Minneapolis were blown up and placed in storefront windows and FLOW exhibits.

The downsized Broadway Liquor Outlet Beer Garden took up a small portion of Logan Ave where adjacent on the KMOJ stage local artists including Margeaux Davis, Ashley DuBose, S. Madison and KWICK Colbert performed.

"I always wanted to perform at FLOW and I finally did," said Colbert, a Christian rapper and guitar artist shortly after stepping off stage, instruments in tow. "The experience was really cool. I loved the opportunity. Everybody's coming together, listening to music and getting to know each other."

North Minneapolis resident April Williams and folk artist Donyelle Headington agreed.

"I think they need to have FLOW on the Northside to bring something other than the negativity it's associated with. It shows that's there's more than gangbanging and shooting. There's art, there's people, there's community, there's family," Williams said.

"I am so pleased and my spirit is fed from this. I'm so happy to see so many creative and non-creative people being involved in a unified way. Everybody's appreciating everybody and I love it," Headington added.

Her mini quilts with dolls emerging from the cloth gave off a 3D effect. Fascinating at first glance, the quilts matched in uniqueness with Headington's actual spiral-bodied folk dolls.

"The thing I like about this medium is that I can use everything at once. I can bead, paint, sculpt, sew and braid. I can do every kind of medium in one little piece."

Similar to Headington's variant creative process, painter Richard Amos uses pieces of cut up blue jeans to construct large, vibrant African masks on canvas.

"An opportunity for artists to come together and show their work in north Minneapolis is very rare," Amos said showing off pieces created just for FLOW.

"There are different names for masks depending on what they represent," he added. "In Africa masks are made for celebrations, harvests, marriages, deaths and different things. I make masks not for a celebration of anything but life."

Community members, participating businesses and artists constantly reiterated that FLOW is an appreciated effort helping to rid north Minneapolis of the attached negative labels. As the event once again fulfilled this purpose, the continued goal is to prove year-round that artists from all walks — talented and ambitious people from and on the northside are there to stay.

Click here for more photos: http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2012/07/31/flow-northside-arts-crawl-returns-soul-minneapolis